

OCAO Telework Policy

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Speaking at the March 31, 2010 White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, President Barack Obama declared “work is what you do, not where you do it” emphasizing the integral role of telework in achieving flexible, resilient workplaces. We recognize telework as a valuable tool for getting work done. This policy establishes the parameters for telework within the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (OCAO). It applies to telework participants and is designed to provide the structure needed for effective implementation and operation of telework within OCAO.

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Overview

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-292) was enacted on December 9, 2010 and was a significant milestone in the history of Federal telework. The Act is a key factor in the Federal Government's ability to achieve greater flexibility in managing its workforce through the use of telework. Speaking at the March 31, 2010 White House Forum on Workplace Flexibility, President Barack Obama declared “work is what you do, not where you do it” emphasizing the integral role of telework in achieving flexible, resilient workplaces. We recognize telework as a valuable tool for getting work done. Telework provides cost savings to the agency through space savings, increased recruitment and retention, and enhanced efficiency. It also provides an increased opportunity for work flexibility and expanded work life balance for participating employees.

This policy establishes the parameters for OCAO telework. It applies to telework participants and is designed to provide the structure needed for effective implementation and operation of OCAO. This policy will allow for the make maximum use of telework in accomplishing the OCAO mission.

Definitions

Alternative Worksite (AW) - A work location other than the government work site. Generally this is in the employee’s home, designated by the employee as the location they will use to perform their official OCAO duties.

Eligible Positions - Positions where in the OCAO Director’s judgment, specific work activities are portable and can be performed effectively outside the office without diminishing individual or organizational performance. Performance can be judged either through quality and timeliness of assignments or quantity of tasks completed or a combination of these factors.

Hoteling – Hoteling is a telework arrangement in which employees are not assigned permanent space in a central office, but rather share offices and conference space as necessary when the employees are present at the official duty station. Such space is assigned by reservation, much like a hotel.

OCAO Telework – Is a work arrangement that allows an eligible employee to perform work during any part of regular paid hours at home. The eligibility of an employee to participate in telework is determined by their manager and/or their director.

Official Duty Station - An employee’s official duty station determines eligibility for locality pay. For most OCAO employees, their official duty station will be Silver Spring, MD and it will not change with participation in telework.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) - any information about an individual maintained by an agency, which can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity.

Telework - Also referred to as teleworking, telecommuting, flexiwork, and flexiplace. Telework is an alternative work arrangement for employees to conduct all or some of their work away from the primary workplace.

Telework Agreement - A formal agreement completed collaboratively by an employee and a supervisor specifying the telecommuting schedule of the employee, the communication requirements while at the alternative worksite, and property accountability responsibilities.

Scope

The provisions of this document apply to all telework participants in OCAO.

Policy

OCAO telework is a work arrangement that allows participants to work at an alternative worksite during paid work hours to conduct their officially assigned duties. As used herein, “alternative worksite” is defined as the employee’s residence or other location (other than the employee’s conventional OCAO worksite) approved by OCAO for the performance of the employee’s official duties. For purposes of telework, the alternative worksite is considered to be an official Government worksite.

Employees participating in the OCAO telework will continue to provide internal and external customer service and maintain normal functions and satisfactory performance. OCAO telework employees will be allowed to participate to the maximum extent possible without diminished performance so long as they meet the requirements of this policy and obtain supervisory approval. The OCAO telework allows participants to work from the alternative worksite up to 5 days a week.

Abuse of OCAO telework/telecommuting policy may result in removal from telework and impact further participation in telework arrangements.

Terms of Participation

Telework is not mandatory. This arrangement is voluntary and can be canceled at any time by either the employee or the supervisor.

Eligibility

Duties Suited for Telework

Although many positions are suitable for telework, Public Law 106-346 recognizes that not all aspects of all jobs can be performed at alternative worksites. Each business unit participating in the initiative must identify positions suitable for telework, as well as those positions that are not.

Work suitable for telework depends on job content. Suitability is not determined by job series or title, type of appointment, or work schedule. However, even jobs not entirely suited for telework may contain duties that can be performed at an AW either on a regularly scheduled or intermittent/episodic basis.

The functions, duties, and tasks of suitable positions for telework typically include:

- Work activities that are portable and can be performed effectively outside employees' conventional office.
- Measurable Job tasks or project-oriented assignments.
- Client or customer contacts that are predictable or may be satisfied by frequently checking voice mail for messages.
- Work contacts that can be adjusted to allow for telephone communications or conducted when the teleworking employee is at the conventional office.

Criteria for Employee Participation in OCAO Telework

An employee may be authorized to participate in OCAO telework if the following criteria are met:

- Employee must be in a position that has been deemed eligible by the business unit.
- Employee will have and maintain a proven or expected minimum performance rating of at least a *Fully Successful* performance rating. For a pass/fail performance management system, the employee's most recent performance appraisal is "Meets or Exceeds Expectations" or "Eligible" depending upon the system.
- Employee is not currently in a probationary status as probationary status periods are established to allow supervisors an opportunity to personally observe and evaluate employee performance.
- Employee is not currently subject to a performance improvement plan.
- Employee must sign the OCAO Telework Agreement.

Responsibilities

Parties

OCAO Telework Coordinator

The OCAO Telework Coordinator will serve as the point of contact for receiving and distributing telework information and responding to the NOAA Telework Coordinator's request for statistical and program information. WFMO is responsible for NOAA-wide oversight of the NOAA Telework Program and any reporting requirements to DOC.

The OCAO Telework Coordinator shall periodically review telework eligibility approvals and disapprovals to ensure consistency of application, direct changes as necessary, and provide guidance as required.

OCAO Telework Technology Coordinator

The OCAO Telework Technology Coordinator will coordinate telework technology related matters and work with the OCIO to:

- Understand specific remote access requirements of the participating Business Units.
- Implement enterprise remote access solutions to include: IT capability at remote locations, Internet connections, back-end platforms for delivering Automated Information Systems (AISs) and data, collaboration capability, office reservation systems and telecommunication and collaboration services.

- Ensure proper support and service for remote access solutions to include: equipment deployment, equipment maintenance, equipment retrieval, and Help Desk problem resolution – minor to advanced.
- Promote compliance with all applicable Federal laws, rules, and regulations pertaining to information technology and remote access.

OCAO Office Directors/Managers

OCAO Office Directors/managers are responsible for administering telework within their unit and ensuring that the initiative is operating within the parameters of the OCAO telework policy.

Supervisors

Supervisors are responsible for overall management and success of telework within their work units, including day-to-day operations. In addition, supervisors must:

- Determine participant eligibility (using the factors in the OCAO telework policy). Supervisors should evaluate employees' requests for telework participation in a reasonable manner, ensuring that restrictions or denials are based on mission-related criteria.
- Ensure a telework agreement and safety checklist are completed and signed. The telework agreement outlines the terms and conditions of the telework arrangement. Maintain a copy of all telework forms.
- Ensure that an eligible employee, prior to teleworking, takes OPM's telework web-based training at http://www.telework.gov/Tools_and_Resources/Training/Employees/index.aspx and prints out the certificate indicating the employee has completed the training.
- Respond to requests for information or reporting requirements from the OCOA Telework Coordinator and OCAO Telework Technology Coordinator.
- Treat all employees, whether teleworking or not, in a consistent manner for purposes of all decisions involving managerial discretion, including:
 - **Work assignments.** Supervisors will evaluate distribution of assignments to ensure equitable distribution of workload among all workers, whether working at the agency worksite or at approved alternative worksites. Teleworkers will be considered equally for the selection of assignments, or any other employer/employee matter. Supervisors and teleworkers will ensure that telework does not place a hardship or extra workload on employees working at the agency worksite.
 - **Work tracking and communication tools.** Supervisors may require use of appropriate work tracking and communication tools, provided they are required of all employees, regardless of whether or not they telework. Managers may not impose specific reporting requirements or other unique requirements on teleworkers.
 - **Performance management.** Good performance management practices are essential for all employees to work effectively and equitably. All employees (teleworkers and non-teleworkers) must complete work satisfactorily and in accordance with performance standards and guidelines in their performance plan. Recognition, including awards, will

be distributed based on employee performance; whether an employee is a teleworker or non-teleworker will not affect decisions.

Employees

Employees who are participating in OCAO telework are in an official duty status and must:

- Successfully complete telework training before beginning telework at the AW.
- Adhere to the Standards of Conduct for Executive Branch employees and any other Agency policies while working at the AW.
- Actively participate in the completion of the OCAO Telework Application, Agreement, and Safety Check List. Adhere to and operate under the provisions of the Telework Agreement.
- Ensure that the approved alternative worksite provides the work environment, connectivity, technology, resource access, and security consistent with the work to be done.
- Observe policies on requesting leave when leave is to be taken.
- Use Government equipment in accordance with regulations governing use.
- Not engage in any non-governmental activities while in official duty status at the AW. This includes caring for a child or providing elder care or conducting personal business.
- Promptly notify the supervisor whenever problems arise that adversely affect their ability to perform work at the AW, including an injury or occupational disease occurring at the AW.
- Remain flexible and responsive to the needs of the employing organization and work team. As with all work, employees must make the required individual contributions to the efforts of their work team, and communicate and collaborate as appropriate with team members, ensuring that telework supports the work of the team and does not disrupt it.

Implementation Guidelines

Telework Forms

In order to participate in the OCAO Telework Program, the following forms must be completed by the employee:

- OCAO's Telework Application and Agreement & Telework Safety Checklist - http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/ocao/telework/MTI_Telework_Agreement_Rev2.docx
- NOAA's Telework Termination Form - <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/pdfs/telework-termination-form.pdf>

Create a Telework Agreement

A telework agreement is a joint agreement between an employee and management, outlining the parameters of the employee's plan for telework. The OCAO telework agreement remains in effect as

long as applicable to the work situation. The following actions are to be taken when establishing a telework arrangement:

- The eligible employee submits a completed application to the immediate supervisor.
- The employee and supervisor discuss the proposed telework arrangement and type of work to be done by the employee at the alternative worksite.
- When the suitable arrangement is reached, the employee and the supervisor complete the telework agreement and the safety checklist if the alternative worksite is in the employee's home.
- The telework agreement is signed by the employee and the immediate supervisor.
- Supervisor submits the signed agreement to the OCAO Telework Coordinator.
- Employee works with the OCAO Telework Technology Coordinator and OCIO to obtain remote access approval.
- OCIO will approve/deny the employee's request for remote access.
- Once provided remote access, the employee will take the telework training provided by OPM http://www.telework.gov/Tools_and_Resources/Training/Employees/index.aspx.
- Upon successful completion of the telework training and all telework forms, the employee may begin teleworking.
- The telework agreement should be renewed annually by the employee, immediate supervisor, and telework coordinator.

Origination, modification or termination of a Telework Agreement may be initiated by management or the employee in accordance with an employee's desire to telework, changes in position, or employee eligibility, modification of telework type or schedule, or to address telework impact on organizational performance.

Establish the Work Schedule

Work schedules identify the days and times the employee will work in each work setting. Normally, work schedules at the telework location will parallel those at the regular worksite but can be structured to meet the needs of participating employees, their supervisors, and their organizational mission. The process of establishing work schedules permits periodic adjustments to achieve an optimal schedule, which can meet organizational requirements and suit employee needs.

Approved telework participants must meet with their supervisor to establish communication expectations and methods to ensure information is shared effectively. Teleworkers must meet organizational and work team requirements regarding communication and accessibility. This information should be included within the telework agreement.

Special Circumstances

Overtime Work

In accordance with DOC pay policy, overtime must be approved in advance (memo, e-mail, CD-81) to preclude any unintended liability for premium pay, employees who telework must have prior

supervisory approval to work overtime. Failure to obtain supervisory approval prior to working overtime may result in the termination of the telework arrangement, and the time worked may not be compensated. For additional information on overtime, consult the DOC Premium Pay Manual at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>.

Leave

Telework participants shall adhere to all established leave procedures. The procedures for requesting leave remain unchanged for telework participants. Teleworkers are still required to request and obtain approval of leave in advance of its use. For additional information on leave, consult the DOC Leave Handbook at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/information/handbook/handbook.htm>.

Travel

The travel provisions that apply to employees working at a traditional worksite also apply to employees who telework. A teleworker who is directed to travel to another worksite (including the traditional worksite) during his or her regularly scheduled basic tour of duty would have the travel hours credited as hours of work. Similarly, as for all employees, teleworkers who are directed to travel back to the traditional worksite after their regularly scheduled basic tour of duty for irregular or occasional overtime work, are entitled to at least 2 hours of overtime pay or compensatory time off (5 CFR 550.112(h) and 551.401(e)).

Management reserves the right to require employees to report to the traditional worksite on scheduled telework days, based on operational requirements.

Emergency Conditions

Although a variety of circumstances may affect individual situations, the principles governing administrative leave, dismissals, and closings for emergency conditions remain mostly unchanged for OCAO teleworkers.

Emergency dismissal or closure procedures for employees (including employee's teleworking from an alternative worksite) in Federal executive agencies located inside the Washington Capital Beltway are prescribed by OPM on an annual basis. These procedures apply not just in adverse weather conditions (snow emergencies, severe icing conditions, floods, earthquakes, and hurricanes), but in all kinds of emergency situations including air pollution, disruption of power and/or water, and interruption of public transportation.

OPM's current policy in situations where it deems Federal agencies to be "closed" is that employees not designated as "emergency employees" (including teleworking employees at an alternative work site) are excused from duty without loss of pay or charge to leave. Consistent with this advice, teleworkers whose traditional worksite is inside the Washington DC Beltway will observe the same closedown arrangements as employees at the traditional worksite. For OCAO offices located outside the Washington DC beltway that are affected by emergency situations or closings, managers should determine action on a case-by-case basis.

If conditions at the Agency impact the ability to work at the alternative worksite (e.g. the Office servers are shut down), employees at the alternative worksite will be treated in the same manner as those at the OCAO Headquarters.

When an emergency affects only the alternative worksite and can reasonably be expected to last for a major portion of the workday, the employee is expected to report to the regular office or request supervisory approval of annual leave, compensatory time, credit hours if on a flexible work schedule, or leave without pay.

If the employee knows in advance of a situation that would preclude working at the alternative worksite, a change in work schedule, leave, or work at the employee's traditional worksite must be scheduled.

Early Dismissal

If the employing organization announces an early dismissal of employees for non-emergency conditions, such as on the day prior to a Federal holiday, employees who telework will be excused.

Implementation Costs

Appropriated resources will be used to pay for official government business only. Expenses related to the implementing the telework agreement such as a portion of monthly service charges for telephone, cable, DSL, or ISDN lines in the private residence of teleworking employees may be covered.

OCAO will provide participants in OCAO standard office supplies and necessary equipment for use at the alternative worksite.

Identify and Prepare Alternative Worksite

The Alternative Worksite

A specific work location for performance of telework duties must be identified and authorized in advance by the employee's immediate supervisor. Requirements will vary depending on the nature of the work and the equipment needed to perform the work.

Employees participating in OCAO telework are expected to perform their duties and responsibilities at the telework location at a fully successful level or greater. Consequently, it is critical that the alternative worksite be free from distractions and employees free from obligations which would impair their ability to provide the same time and level of attention to the work product as when onsite.

Safety

Employees are responsible for verifying and ensuring that their alternative work areas comply with health and safety requirements as demonstrated by certifying the Safety Checklist in Appendix A-2 of the [OCAO Telework Agreement](#). With advanced notice of at least 24 hours, the supervisor has the right to inspect the AW for compliance with health and safety requirements. An employee's request to telework may be disapproved or rescinded based on safety problems or the presence of hazardous materials.

Participants are covered under the Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA) if injured in the course of performing official duties at the alternative worksite. If so injured, the participant will notify their supervisor as soon as possible (in accordance with FECA). Upon notification, OCAO may investigate all accident and injury reports that occur at alternative worksites. OCAO will not be liable for damages to an employee's personal or real property during the course of performance of official duties or while using OCAO material in the employee's residence or elsewhere, except to the extent the OCAO is held liable by the Federal Tort Claims Act claims or claims arising under the Military Personnel and Civilian Employees Claims Act.

Equipment

OCAO will provide telework participant's government- issued equipment to permit teleworking for all eligible employees (as remote access is only possible on government-issued computers).

Teleworking employees must notify their supervisor immediately of any malfunction of Government-owned equipment. For teleworkers working at approved alternative worksites, when an issue cannot be resolved remotely, employees may be directed to bring their devices to the nearest OCAO office where local support and/or replacement parts can be dispatched. There will be no on-site IT support provided at the AW.

When Government-owned equipment is being used, the employee must only use this equipment for authorized purposes and the Government retains ownership and control of the hardware, software, and data. Participants will maintain reasonable care of all OCAO-owned material. OCAO acts as the insurer for damage, theft or other loss (e.g. fire, flood, etc.) of the OCAO material.

IT Resources

In accordance with the OCIO standards, employees authorized to telework and whose jobs positions require access to NOAA systems must provide broadband internet access and have Virtual Private Network (VPN) software loaded on their government computers. VPN is required to access any resource that runs on a NOAA network/intranet and is loaded onto the employees computer by the Help Desk. The remote user agreement can be found at http://nrc.iso.noaa.gov/help_desk.html. Approved anti-virus software is also required. The Agency may periodically revise these standards, and any changes in required connection will be communicated to employees.

Secure Operations

All employees will follow guidelines issued by the NOAA CIO for remote access security. Teleworkers are responsible for following the DOC's Information Technology Security Program Policy, Remote Access Security Policy and Minimum Implementation Standards, all applicable policies contained in the Department's Information Technology Management Handbook. The DOC IT policies are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/cio/policy_guidance.htm.

The workplace and workstation must be set up to afford secure information processing, including the proper storage of sensitive DOC, NOAA and proprietary information in both electronic and paper form. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that teleworkers follow the security practices outlined above. Supervisors must ensure that the designated workspace or workstation of the employee has adequate

physical or environmental security measures in place to protect the equipment from being accessed by unauthorized individuals.

Space Utilization at OCAO Worksite

When people frequently work from alternative locations, their assigned work space becomes underutilized. By assessing how work is performed, the organization can customize the work space with a combination of dedicated workstations, shared workstations, and collaboration spaces. There are several alternatives available to maximize the use of the office space when teleworkers need to visit the office. They include:

- Dedicated workstations – in a teleworking capacity, these workstations are smaller, more efficient, and not necessarily enclosed.
- Shared Workstations:
 - Desk Sharing - An arrangement in which two or more employees share the use of a single workspace. Each employee has a designated day or time for use of the workspace.
 - Hoteling - An arrangement in which employees use non-dedicated, non-permanent workspaces assigned for use by reservation on an as-needed basis.
 - Hot desking (also known as free address or touchdown workstations) - An arrangement in which employees use non-dedicated, non-permanent workspaces that are assigned on an unreserved first come, first served basis (typically drop-in).

The supervisors of employees participating in OCAO telework will determine which alternative(s) meets workspace needs and implement accordingly.

Implementation Responsibilities

Supervisor

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to:

- Ensure the employee understands and agrees with the terms and conditions of the telework agreement.
- Establish a work schedule which addresses communication requirements and performance expectations. Give advance notice of at least two business days for all meetings, lectures, training, or other events that require the physical presence of the OCAO telework participant at the official worksite to the maximum extent practicable.
- Ensure that procedures are established for safeguarding records.
- Ensure that applicable policies and procedures are followed under a telework agreement with regard to:
 - removal of and accountability for government property.
 - approval of overtime, leave, and alternative work schedules.
- Investigate employee reports of work-related injury or illness at the alternative worksite in much the same manner as would be the case for injury or illness at the traditional worksite.

- Terminate, modify or temporarily suspend telework agreements for mission- related reasons, such as decline in employee's overall performance, failure to adhere to the terms and conditions of the agreement, changes in office priorities, vacancies or long-term leave of other employees in the office that cause office coverage issues.
- Make arrangements for the employee to begin working at the OCAO worksite as quickly as possible following an employee's request to terminate a telework agreement, or when supervisor determines that the telework agreement must be temporarily suspended or terminated.

Employee

It is the responsibility of the employee to:

- Review the terms and conditions of the telework agreement with supervisor.
- Maintain agreed upon work schedule including communication with supervisor and teammates.
- Indicate on the timesheet which days were worked at the alternative worksite. Participants may take approved leave and use approved compensatory time on a telework day.

Dependent Care

Telework can provide valuable assistance with dependent care. Time saved commuting to work can be spent with family members. Dependent care arrangements will not typically change because of telework, since employees should not be engaged in care giving activities while working. However, dependents may be at home while the employee teleworks if those dependents are independently pursuing their own activities.

For example, an older child or elderly dependent might be at home while the employee teleworks if those dependents are independently pursuing their own activities.

Employees are expected to take the appropriate leave to care for dependents. For example, when telework takes place in the employee's home and a child, who would not normally be left at home without an adult, is at home due to illness or a non-medical reason, the employee would need to take the appropriate leave.

Reporting Requirements

OCAO Telework Coordinator is the primary contact for reporting the status and success of telework in OCAO and preparing required reports, as needed, for inclusion in NOAA-wide reporting requirements mandated by the Department. OCAO